

Oakland Tribune

Pete Stark goes after president on drug coverage issue

Lawmaker says Bush's alcoholism should help him understand need for funding

By Lisa Friedman

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WASHINGTON -- Another verbal missile from Rep. Pete Stark.

This time the East Bay congressman's target was none other than George W. Bush and the president's one-time struggle with alcohol.

Speaking to Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson during a committee hearing Thursday, Stark criticized the administration for devoting what he described as more attention to faith-based programs for drug treatment than to prescription drug coverage for senior citizens.

"I don't think the president had to pay a penny when he went to AA, and my impression is that it's still free," Stark said.

Bush has said he never went into a substance abuse program like Alcoholics Anonymous and stopped drinking on his own.

The White House declined to comment on Stark's remarks.

There's a move in Congress to give peace a second chance, and Bay Area pols are behind it.

Reps. Barbara Lee, D-Oakland; Lynn Woolsey, D-San Rafael; and Pete Stark, D-Fremont, are among the 29 Democrats and one Republican (Ron Paul of Texas) trying to force President Bush to return to Congress before launching an attack on Iraq.

The group introduced legislation this week that would repeal a use-of-force resolution the House and Senate passed last year.

"The inspection teams have not had the time or opportunity to fulfill their task. War is not the answer," Lee said.

Stark said at this point the only thing that would convince him of the need to invade Iraq is "if they could identify that (Saddam) has the military capability to deliver a strike on anybody more than 100 miles from his borders."

Resuming nuclear testing would "encourage a new worldwide arms race," nearly 100 lawmakers -- including several from the Bay Area -- told President Bush this week.

In a letter to Bush, Rep. Edward Markey, D-Mass., and members of a congressional task force on nonproliferation called for the president to continue the moratorium on nuclear testing that America has imposed on itself since 1990.

Administration officials continue to maintain they do not plan to test nuclear weapons again soon. But they also insist there might someday be a need to do so, and that's why the government seeks to spend \$16 million in the coming year on the Nevada Test Site.

In addition to Markey, the plea not to resume testing again came from Reps. Ellen Tauscher, D-Alamo; Zoe Lofgren, D-San Jose; Lynn Woolsey, D-San Rafael; Barbara Lee, D-Oakland; Mike Honda, D-San Jose; Anna Eshoo, D-Palo Alto, and Mike Thompson, D-Napa.

Meanwhile, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told Tauscher this week that he is "99.9 percent positive there is no new weapons development" despite reports of a \$1.26 billion Pentagon program to study the use of new nuclear weapons.

At the same time, Rumsfeld did acknowledge research is being conducted on robust nuclear earth penetrators, weapons that could be used to destroy deeply buried targets that might contain chemical, biological or nuclear agents. Research on such weapons is under way in places such as Livermore lab.

Tauscher later said she was "dissatisfied" with Rumsfeld's response.

"I oppose developing new nuclear weapons. I think it's a very dangerous road for our country to go down," she said.

The Golden Gate National Recreation Area could keep growing under a bill introduced last week by Rep. Tom Lantos, D-San Mateo.

The bill, supported by nine other Bay Area lawmakers, would expand the park by 5,000 acres, putting three new coastal areas into federal protection.

Lantos and Rep. Henry Hyde, R-Ill., chair of the International Relations Committee, introduced a resolution condemning the recent choice of Libya to chair the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

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